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THE CONTENT OF STEREOTYPIC MASCULINITY-FEMININITY.

BY- LUNNEBORG, PATRICIA W.
WASHINGTON UNIV., SEATTLE

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TO UNDERSTAND STEREOTYPIC ITEMS IN MASCULINITY-FEMININITY (MF) SCALES (ITEMS THOUGHT TO DISCRIMINATE THE SEXES BUT SHOWING NO SEX DIFFERENCE), THE EDWARDS PERSONALITY INVENTORY (EPI) WAS ADMINISTERED TO 398 SUBJECTS UNDER MALE AND FEMALE INSTRUCTIONAL SETS. THESE INSTRUCTIONS CREATED SEX DIFFERENCES IN 13 OF 14 EPI SCALES, PRODUCING ON FIVE SCALES, DIFFERENCES NONEXISTENT IN SELF-DESCRIPTION. WOMEN WERE JUDGED BETTER ORGANIZERS, LESS PERSISTENT, CAREFREE AND RECLUSIVE, AND MORE WORRIED ABOUT IMPRESSING OTHERS THAN MEN. MULTIDIMENSIONAL STEREOTYPE MF DEMANDS COMPLETE EXPLORATION AS A CORRECTIVE TO DEFENSIVENESS IN SELF-DESCRIPTION ON TRUE MF ITEMS AND AS A DISTINCT MF ASPECT, POTENTIALLY AS CORRELATED WITH HUMAN PERFORMANCE AS TRUE MF. (AUTHOR)

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The Content of Stereotypic Masculinity-Femininity[1]

Patricia W. Lunneborg

To understand stereotypic items in MF scales, i.e., items thought to discriminate the sexes but showing no sex difference, Edwards Personality Inventory was administered 398 Ss under male or female instructional sets. These instructions created sex differences in 13 of 14 EPI scales, producing on five scales differences nonexistent in self-description. Women were judged better organizers, less persistent, carefree, and reclusive, and more worried about impressing others. Multidimensional stereotype MF demands complete exploration as a corrective to defensiveness in self-description on true MF items and as a distinct MF aspect, potentially as correlated with human performance as true MF.

Two studies of masculinity-femininity (MF) as measured by objective MF scales both reported that these scales contained pools of items eliciting responses on bases other than sex status (Lunneborg and Lunneborg, 1967; Nichols, 1962). This was striking inasmuch as these MF items were originally selected because each showed a significant sex difference. In Nichols' (1962) investigation a number of these nondiscriminating items were nonetheless rated by student judges as discriminating males from females and earned the appellation stereotype MF items. Similarly, an interitem factoring of MF items produced several factors which failed to correlate with sex, factors described as stereotypic notions of sex differences in personality (Lunneborg and Lunneborg, 1967). The outstanding aspect to stereotypic MF in these and other studies appears to be emotional sensitivity and/or neuroticism, popularly associated with femininity although uncorrelated with female sex status.

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Although both the above studies confirmed the existence of stereotypic MF, neither had very much to say about the nature of these stereotypes. Both seemed to interpret stereotypic MF negatively, i.e., as interfering with the measurement of "true" MF, and emphasized the need for scales which truly correlated with sex status. The present study was based on the idea that stereotypic MF could contribute a great deal more to understanding masculinity-femininity than merely representing undesirable response variance which needs partialling out. The content of stereotypic MF items not only reflects the ways in which sex differences are (mis) perceived but provides a starting point for measuring this distinct aspect of MF, which aspect may be as usefully related to human performance as true MF.

To continue studying stereotypic MF with item pools like those of the earlier studies was felt to limit severely the range of psychological traits represented, i.e., all MF items, no matter to what other scales in the MMPI or CPI, etc. they might belong, had to correlate with sex to qualify for inclusion in an MF scale. Further, whenever these MF items are later found uncorrelated with sex, it could be due to chance alone. For example, in a first sample in Nichols' study (1962) an experimental scale consisting entirely of stereotypic items correlated .06 with sex, but in a cross-validation group the correlation rose to .44. It thus appeared that MF stereotypy would better be studied among test items which spanned a comprehensive array of psychological traits and which were free of the necessity that they originally discriminated the sexes. Edwards Personality Inventory or EPI (1968) represents a recent, systematic survey of important normal personality variables. This study used the fourteen scales of Booklet IA, a set identified as being most relevant in counseling college-age individuals. The

technique was that of Nichols (1962) where sex differences in Edwards' normative population were compared with stereotype responses of two experimental groups, one asked to mark the answer most frequently given by males, the other the answer frequently given by females.

Method

Subjects. Edwards' normative sample consisted of paid volunteers, 203 male and 329 female college students who completed the entire EPI as they would be described "by those persons who know you best." The experimental sample consisted of 162 males and 236 females at the same university, recruited from introductory psychology classes. The experimental sample was divided into two groups which received different instructions. The male instructions group had 204 Ss, the female instructions group had 194 Ss, the sexes being proportionately represented in each instructional group.

Procedure. The experimental sample was told that many EPI items were answered in opposite directions by men and women. In order to refine the test, they were told, additional evidence of the sex stereotypy of the items was needed. They were therefore instructed not to describe themselves but rather to give the answer most men (women) would give to describe themselves.

Analysis. Sex difference phi coefficients were computed for each of the 295 items in Booklet 1A utilizing item response data for the normative sample provided by Edwards. Stereotype phi coefficients were next computed for the experimental sample correlating instructional set (male or female) with item response (true or false). As the sexes were balanced in the two experimental instructions groups, sex of respondent was not tested, evidence having earlier been collected that there are no differences between males and females in their ability to respond under either of these stereotype

instructions (Lunneborg and Lunneborg, 1966). As in Nichols' study (1962) stereotype MF items were identified as those which had actual sex difference phi's $\leq$.10 and stereotype phi's $\geq$.30. Utilizing a more liberal definition than Nichols, obvious MF items were those with sex difference phi's $\geq$.20 and stereotype phi's $\geq$.30.

The EPI manual reports differences between means on all scales for males and females in the normative group. To test the overall influence of sex stereotypy upon the 14 scales, means and standard deviations were also obtained for the experimental sample, i.e., for the group responding as males and for the group responding as females.

Results

Forty-two of the EPI items discriminated the sexes at the .05 level of significance (phi $\geq$.14). Ten of these were obvious MF items as earlier defined and seven corresponded to Nichols' (1962) notion of subtle MF, i.e., they also had nonsignificant stereotype phy coefficients. In line with Nichols' thinking, obvious MF items thus discriminated the sexes and were judged by subjects to be sex discriminating. Subtle MF items, which still remain essentially a theoretical possibility, were defined as items not thought to discriminate the sexes but which in fact did. And lastly, stereotype MF items did not discriminate the sexes despite the fact that they were judged to do so. Sixteen percent or 47 EPI items met the definition of stereotype MF leaving 70% EPI items not judged to show a sex difference and not showing one.

Over half of the 47 stereotype MF items were concentrated in three EPI scales, H Conforms (8 items), I Is a leader (5), and K Worries about making

Table 1

Mean Differences on Edwards Experimental Personality Inventory 1A for the Sexes and for Subjects Responding under Sex Stereotype Instructions

Scale	Means		Difference	Means		Difference
	Males (N = 203)	Females (N = 329)	between means	Male set (N = 203)	Female set (N = 191)	between means
A. Plans and organizes things	10.57	10.44	.13	11.55	12.79	-1.24*
B. Intellectually oriented	21.69	19.94	1.75***	20.28	12.64	7.64***
C. Persistent	11.52	11.01	.51	13.29	9.66	3.63***
D. Self-confident	11.98	10.57	1.41***	12.82	8.29	4.53***
E. Has cultural interests	11.17	12.34	-1.17**	7.17	9.74	-2.57***
F. Enjoys being center of atten.	8.41	7.30	1.11**	10.60	8.23	2.37***
G. Carefree	13.72	13.39	.33	14.59	12.85	1.74***
H. Conforms	7.55	8.65	-1.10**	7.04	12.12	-5.08***
I. Is a leader	12.82	10.70	2.12***	16.13	9.77	6.36***
J. Kind to others	13.16	14.22	-1.06**	10.65	14.19	-3.54***
K. Worries about good impress.	10.41	11.20	- .79	8.67	14.77	-6.10***
L. Seeks new experiences	11.68	11.74	- .06	11.14	11.64	- .50
M. Likes to be alone	8.70	8.83	- .13	7.61	5.28	2.33***
N. Interest in others' behavior	18.87	20.18	-1.31*	14.05	17.62	-3.57***

Note.--*.05, **.01, ***.001 level of significance

a good impression on others (12). Scales H and I show a significant difference in favor of one sex (women conform, men lead), but on Scale K, with 12 of its 20 items thought to discriminate the sexes (women worry about good impression), male and female means do not differ significantly. Table 1 presents these means and differences from the EPI manual and the means and differences for the experimental groups instructed to behave as males and females. As can be seen, stereotype instructions created sex differences in 13 of the 14 scales. One effect of stereotypy was to exaggerate existing sex differences: those in favor of men in intellectual orientation, self-confidence, being the center of attention, and leadership, and those in favor of women in cultural interests, conformity, kindness, and interest in others' behavior. Another effect of stereotypy was to produce sex differences which are not evident in self-description. Five scales which originally did not discriminate the sexes did under stereotype instructions: A Plans and organizes things (women), C Persistent (men), G Carefree (men), K Worries about making a good impression on others (women), and M Likes to be alone (men).

Discussion

Administering the EPI under sex stereotype instructions established that there are a number of personality traits susceptible to distortion in favor of one sex or the other. Some scales showed a true sex difference and had that difference magnified. They are comparable to Nichols' obvious items where the reported similarity of a subject's behavior to a given sex is inevitably confounded by his notions of socially prescribed sex roles. There were also scales which showed no true sex difference and yet were judged to be highly discriminating. It is these latter scales

which are the prototype for exploring the dimensionality of stereotype MF, for just as true MF must by definition be correlated with sex status, stereotype MF must not be correlated with sex under ordinary conditions.

Stereotype MF would appear to be multidimensional just as true MF appears to be. The value in ferreting out more stereotype MF areas from other multitrait instruments lies in the complement of stereotype MF measures to obvious or true MF measures. Nichols seemed to feel that the very best measure of MF had to be found in subtle items, items which discriminated the sexes without their awareness. Unfortunately, this kind of item seems to exist only at the level of chance. Thus, an entirely different approach is needed to defensiveness in the self-description of masculinity-femininity.

Nichols (1962) identified three stereotype content categories, categories not appearing at all in items showing large sex differences and indicating real disagreement between the stereotype and actual response: females were judged to have more neurotic symptoms, to be more suspicious and more moral than males. MF item factors uncorrelated with sex status were emotional sensitivity, rejection of adventure, neurotic symptoms, self-confidence, extroversion, and unsociable nonconformity (Lunneborg and Lunneborg, 1967). The first three are often associated with women, the last three with men. In the present study five new MF stereotypes appeared and the reported behavior of the sexes can be compared with what is expected of them. Women were held to be better organizers and less content being alone than they said they were. Men were judged far more persistent and, ironically, more carefree than they said they were,

while women were thought less persistent and less carefree than they reported. Lastly, men were judged less worried and women more worried about making a good impression on others than the sexes admitted in self-description.

This study serves as one step in the enumeration of personality traits which are prone to current stereotypes regarding behavior, beliefs, attitudes, and interests which differentiate men and women. When the catalog is complete, new items must be written for each of these traits and stereotype scales constructed of only those items which survive the test of showing no actual sex difference when one is judged to be there. For a complete description of an individual's sex role identification must not only include the ways in which he acknowledges he is like his sex, but the ways in which he sees his sex. Stereotype scores might thus serve to establish the credibility of true MF scale scores while representing a reliable aspect to MF worthy of study in its own right.

For the question remains whether both stereotype and true MF measures may be similar to actual behavior. All "true" means operationally is that an item shows a significant sex difference. If a dimension recognized by everyone as truly discriminating the sexes does not do so, one reason might be that the dimension is socially undesirable. The sex for whom the unflattering trait was true would tend in self-description to deny it, masking the item's sex discriminability. Perhaps this is how some stereotype MF traits are produced, e.g., neuroticism, but high scale scores on such a stereotype trait might be closer to real behavior than low scores (rather than interpreting high scores simply as a greater tendency to respond in

terms of sex stereotypes). By the same token, some socially desirable traits on which the sexes behaviorally differ may suffer in differentiating them because both sexes wish to acknowledge the trait in personal description. Finally, there is that type of stereotype MF which is associated with traditional, outmoded caricatures of differences between the sexes. The latter MF stereotype may prove as important or as valid a trait in relation to human performance as any other type of MF measure despite its lack of relevance for the concept masculinity-femininity.

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